

of taxation proposed is two shillings of tax to the pound of site value—about 50 cents to five dollars, or ten per cent. It is to fall exclusively upon the value of sites, improvements being exempt; and unoccupied property is to be taxed for site value as if it were occupied. The burden is fastened upon the owner, tenants who pay it being allowed to deduct it from their rent. This precaution was necessary in order to reach the owners of land under lease. Economic conditions would, in new transactions, make the owner bear the burden better than legislative provisos could. Though ten per cent. of site value has a confiscatory sound on this side of the Atlantic, where site value means selling or capitalized land value, it is really a very light tax; for in London site value means annual site value. If the bill becomes a law it will yield about \$8,000,000, the estimated site value of London being about \$80,000,000 annually. And there is strong probability that it will become a law. At the conclusion of the debate upon it, mentioned above, a hostile motion to refer the bill back to committee was defeated by a vote of 63 to 27, and thereupon it was adopted without dissent. So the bill will be introduced in parliament at the next session with the backing of the county council.

Still other signs of a single tax ground swell are observable. One of these is a long and thoughtful editorial in the Detroit News-Tribune, perhaps the most influential paper of Michigan, under the initials of its proprietor, Mr. J. E. Scripps. Mr. Scripps strenuously urges the abolition in Michigan of all taxation save upon land values—the abolition, that is, of all taxes on personalty and improvements—doing so not as a follower of Henry George, a distinction which he is at pains to disclaim, but as a hard-headed business man speaking for and appealing to his class. The article, which appeared in the News-Tribune of December 23d, is calculated to command serious considera-

tion. There is, to be sure, no thought on Mr. Scripps's part of readjusting general economic conditions by this method. He is not an adventurer upon the billowy sea of social reform. For that reason some of us who want the world made over completely and immediately may be disposed to see nothing significant of radical economic progress in his business-basis advocacy of land value taxation. We may even wish to doubt its efficacy for social reform because a business man advocates it for business reasons. Such a disposition, however, is a pious temptation that should be sternly resisted.

There are but two ways of achieving social reform. One is by revolution; not violent revolution necessarily, but revolution. The other is by steady, patient, commonplace advances in the right direction. Now, revolution seldom finds its opportunity. It almost never finds it except in violent commotions. And when it does find it, whether in peace or war, conditions slip back after the climax almost or quite to where they were before. Somehow, the race seems incapable, when advancing by leaps and bounds, of holding to the advances it makes. Social progress, like vegetable growth, to be firm and enduring must be slow and persistent. The plant that grows up in a day withers in a night. The oak, hardening as it grows, endures. No small matter, then, are these uninspiring indications of deliberate progress along the lines that Henry George laid down, even though made by men who are out of sympathy with his ultimate purposes and for reasons that could never have appealed to his higher aspirations. It is from such men, moved by such reasons, that the popular support necessary for the first practical steps in any enduring economic reform will have to come.

There are disquieting rumors from Washington to the effect that our government contemplates forcible interference with the government

of Venezuela in behalf of a private American corporation. A concession of asphalt deposits had been made by the government of Venezuela to this company. Later the government revoked that concession and made a new one to another American company. The original concessionaire, arming its employes, defied the government; and in the expectation that the government of Venezuela would attempt to enforce its decrees of revocation, our government is preparing, according to the Washington rumors, to support the original concessionaire with the army and navy. Though this story rests upon rumors, there is nothing improbable about it. No one need be surprised, after our imperial experience of the past two years, if the Washington government assumes the function of forcing weak nations to keep improvident contracts with American monopolists. Yet nothing could be more reprehensible. When Americans obtain concessions from foreign powers they take them at their own peril, knowing full well that repudiation, be it immoral or not, is one of the inherent and necessary rights of national sovereignty. To enforce their repudiated claims by making war upon the repudiating country is to make war wantonly in defiance of one of the first principles of international law and of every principle of morality whereby war can at all be justified. Making public war to enforce private contracts or collect private debts is as infamous an excuse for getting glory by slaughtering people as could well be conceived.

Though ex-President Harrison's article on colonialism, which appears in the North American Review for January, is not open to the criticism of incoherency which he preferred against the "verbatim" newspaper report of his Ann Arbor speech of last month, being in point of literary workmanship fully up to its author's well deserved reputation, it is in sentiment neither weaker nor stronger than the speech. Like the speech, the

article is a comprehensive and unequivocal condemnation of President McKinley's colonial policy. Recalling our national history of expansion, Mr. Harrison declares that we have now done something out of line with it; not in the fact of expansion, "but in the character of it." Instead of acquiring unpeopled or sparsely peopled and adjacent regions for settlement, we have gone to the antipodes and "have taken over peoples." This he condemns. His argument centers, however, about the question of the legal status of the annexed peoples, who, he says, "have become American—somethings." Are they citizens or subjects? In seeking an answer to this question Mr. Harrison contends that the Paris treaty cannot abrogate the American constitution. It is the supreme law of the land in no other sense than acts of congress are; that is, so far only as it is constitutional. Inasmuch, then, as the constitution declares that "all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States," the inhabitants of Puerto Rico, for instance, are citizens. The only ground of contention to the contrary is that Puerto Rico is not part of the United States and that point he negatives emphatically. No territory, he argues, can be at once part of the United States and not part of it. It is either one or the other. And being part of it for any constitutional purpose it is so for all. From which it follows not only that the Puerto Ricans are American citizens, but that they are as completely within the protection of the constitution, with reference to equality of tariff taxation as well as to personal rights, as are the citizens of any of the states. Regarding the Philippines, Mr. Harrison leaves a door open on the question of citizenship. The citizenship of the Filipinos depends upon whether we acquired the country. Spain possessed Puerto Rico when she ceded it, but he is not so sure that she possessed the Philippines. If she did not, it might, he hints, be urged

in analogy with a familiar principle of real estate law, that she sold "a lawsuit and not a farm," which "the law counts immoral." Disclaiming any intention to make a legal argument, Mr. Harrison has, nevertheless, made an exceedingly impressive one, yet without departing from his main purpose of considering the matter in a popular way.

In his argument before the supreme court against the colonial policy, Frederic R. Coudert, Jr., made with peculiar distinctness a very vital point of constitutional law. Answering the contention of the administration that this nation is sovereign, capable of exercising the functions of sovereignty that other nations exercise, and therefore capable of setting up subject colonies, Mr. Coudert said:

The American nation is sovereign. It can go where it wishes, act where it wishes, acquire territory where it wishes, treat inhabitants as it wishes, and its powers are only limited by the physical force which may be brought to bear against it by other sovereigns. But the government is not sovereign. The great salient fact, which those who contend for the government's position now do not recognize, is that the people of the United States are sovereign and that the government is not, which is the great fact that distinguishes the constitutional law from that of most of the civilized nations of Europe. It did not make the United States a crippled nation, as the attorney general suggested, but a nation which has permanently protected itself against usurpations by its own agents.

This distinction between the American nation and the American government should never be neglected.

Following the same line of thought Mr. Coudert, with singular brevity, yet with remarkable accuracy and lucidity, set forth the constitutional principle that negatives the whole colonial theory. "The constitution," he said, "is a charter or grant of powers conferred upon the federal government by the people of the United States; and hence the federal government has no existence outside the constitution. It is, therefore, an im-

possibility for the United States to possess territory beyond their constitutional boundaries."

Economic professors who make it their principal function to find or manufacture apologies for plutocracy have at last got so far away from the true causes of hard times, which are obviously the climacterics of an unnatural and unjust distribution of wealth, as to place the responsibility upon the fluctuations of sun spots! This sounds like a joke, but it isn't. It is as serious as the thousand and one other absurdities with which the mumbly-cum-spludge science of economics has patched the brains of the university cult. This particular absurdity is honored with an editorial note in the January issue of the Popular Science Monthly. "There is now reason to believe," says this authority, "that the hypothesis is not a rash guess based on some specious coincidence." It then goes on to explain that two scientists of the name of Lockyer have traced a connection between sun spots and famines. This is most excellent boys' play for the purpose of diverting attention from parasitical industrial systems which produce the phenomena of famine where plenty abounds. But even if it were accepted as being the cause of famines, how could it be adopted as an explanation of periodical hard times? Is not the cult agreed that periodical hard times are due to overproduction? How, then, can they be accounted for by sun spot variations causing underproduction? Can the cult reason that hard times are due to overproduction; that overproduction is equivalent to underproduction; that underproduction is due to "the central points or mean conditions between minima and maxima" of sun spot areas; and that, therefore, hard times are related to fluctuations of the sun spots? Not improbably. Some of its votaries have done worse.

Concrete cases will sometimes carry a principle into minds that are im-